The Effect of Rejected Advice on Individuals High in Unmitigated Communion

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Personality theories have helped social psychologists understand and predict behavior and have been essential in creating treatments for individuals with personality disorders. One recently proposed personality trait, unmitigated communion, has been correlated with depression. Individuals high in unmitigated communion (UC) are more likely to report being upset when they give advice to someone who rejects it. This study seeks to understand whether these individuals actually feel more threatened when their advice is ignored and how this affects their explicit (self-reported) and implicit self-esteem, as measured by a test which they believe to be a test of perceptual ability. It is expected that individuals high in UC will have a greater initial discrepancy between implicit and explicit self-esteem than others (with implicit self-esteem being higher than is usually predicted by an explicit score), that both implicit and explicit self-esteem will be more affected by rejected advice in people high in UC than in others, and that implicit self-esteem in particular will be more affected in them than in others since these individuals' self-concept (and therefore high implicit self-esteem) is based on their assumed superior ability to help others and this particular self-esteem threat negates that perception.

Participants are recruited from the Psychology 101 class. Upon arrival, participants fill out a questionnaire packet that measures several personality traits, such as unmitigated communion. Individuals then complete a State Mood Scale and take the Implicit Association Test for self-esteem. They are then told that they will help another participant in another room complete a complex task by writing down some advice that will be given to the other participant. Several minutes after the participants have submitted the advice sheet, they are given a sheet with either a negative or positive evaluation of their advice, which they are told was written by another participant. The participant then completes a second State Mood Scale and Implicit Association Test for self-esteem, and then is debriefed.

Analyses have shown no significant relationship between UC and the initial difference between individuals' IAT and RSE scores, or between UC and post-manipulation scores. State self-esteem was significant lower for individuals high in UC given the score that would be predicted by the IAT score.